



MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL REVIEWS #509

OCTOBER 2025

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MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL

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This issue contains 96 reviews, contributed by:

Tony Party	Romain Basset
João Seixas	Gonza Perez
Seth McBurney	Tim Janchar
Robert Collins	Jeff Cost
Biff Bifaro	D. Gregory
Jason Harding	Mama Goblin
Daniel Z.	Erika Elizabeth
Emma Miller	
Luke Henley	
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Nick Odorizzi	
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THE COUNTERFORCE

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XANNY STARS – Adaptor EP

Cleveland's XANNY STARS are out with a new four-song EP, and it rules. Pop punk that is as saccharine as it is sour; happy, bouncy, melancholic, and dark. They've been at it since 2019, with two LPs and some singles in their wake, and this EP demonstrates a unified sound—I hope they're just getting started. Opener "Green Sugar" exemplifies their self-description of "The Land's most anxious band," with the line "I want it / But I can't have it / Cause when I have it / It becomes a habit" repeated throughout. Second track "Mega Convenient" has a fun music video to accompany it, with the band dressed as different acts you might see on a public broadcast channel, and is probably the most lighthearted of the group. Third up, "Here We Go Again" takes the cake for the catchiest, mixing a pop beat, killer drawn-out vocals, and a downcast energy that is perfect for any moody teen (or anyone who has been one). Ender "Symmetry" packs the biggest punch, with "You are so / Predictable" shouted on repeat until the song fades out. The production is clean, but not so polished as to remove all the grit. I think fans of RIBBON STAGE would really like this. Relieve your anxiety and buy this EP.

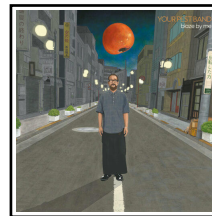
Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Just Because



YOUR PEST BAND – Blaze By Me LP

Putting out music since 2008, these Japanese heavy-hitters keep after it with the new LP *Blaze By Me*. This is their seventh full-length, amongst a sea of singles, EPs, splits, and comps. Chunky guitars, poppy drums, and vocals with enough grit to lure in any listener opposed to "catchy" music, and that's exactly what this is: catchy music, in the best way possible. "Don't Stop the Music," for example, is heartfelt, angsty, uses the title as an anthemic chorus hook, and...has a glam rock solo? Pretty sick. From some brief listens back, it's no surprise that their songs used to be a little louder, faster, and more chaotic, but what we find here still packs plenty of punch, teeth-gnashing, and venom. "They're Talking About" is a prime example of the songwriting mastery at work—MÖTLEY CRÜE guitars with the disenfranchised vocals from punk realms like WIRE, WIPERS, or HÜSKER DÜ. Great LP from this long-tenured band.

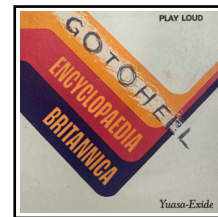
Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Dead Broke



YUASA-EXIDE – Go to Hell Encyclopædia Britannica cassette

Eleven tracks of scruffy, four-track psych pop from prolific Minneapolis singer/songwriter Douglas Bussan. Prolific as in twenty-plus full-length albums of distortion-cracked melodic gems that kind of sound like GUIDED BY VOICES or DEERHUNTER caked in several feet of dirt and grime. Bussan, joined by a revolving cast of friends on these DIY home recordings, has a gruff voice like a lo-fi TOM WAITS calling from a distant payphone, which grounds each melody with world-weariness and authenticity. There is a repetitive droning quality on tracks like "More Surreal" and "The Picture You Painted" coupled with a raw earnestness that pulls you in for repeat listens.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Round Bale



ZEAL – Illusion of Peace LP

For most punks, the word "zeal" has something of a bad connotation, as it might remind one of that excruciatingly annoying colleague who would do anything to be noticed, praised, and rewarded by the boss. We've all had coworkers who groveled their way to the top and would have sold their mums if it meant they could garner a small pay raise. Fortunately, ZEAL does not partake in this kind of capitalistic zeal, as they are hardcore enthusiasts instead. The *Illusion of Peace* LP is a crucial reissue of their tape released in 2024, an absolutely brilliant recording that ticked a lot of highly cherished boxes. ZEAL is from Ottawa and delivers high-intensity, seemingly unstoppable hardcore punk that takes inspiration from the good shit: mean, gruff käng and triumphant Japanese hardcore. The band reminds me of DESTRUCT in terms of relentlessness—listening to this LP makes me feel invincible and just happy to be there (the feeling never lasts long, but you know what I mean). The power of ANTI-CIMEX or DRILLER KILLER gets the front seat with epic Burning Spirits hardcore bands like BAS-TARD or DEATH SIDE close by. I am not always a sucker for the trademark "gang chorus," but they do take the intensity up a notch here. I am also hearing mid-'00s studded bands like Portland's BLOOD SPIT NIGHT or GUIDED CRADLE from Czechia. We are drowning in bands these days and there's a fancy American novelty hardcore band supposedly reinventing the genre every fortnight, so hyperboles have become the norm in how we talk about punk. Still, you can believe me when I claim that this is a fantastic, impactful hardcore punk album that deserves a lot of attention.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Broken Skull



V/A – We Were Living In Cincinnati, Vol. 2 LP

Following the first volume of *We Were Living in Cincinnati* that documented the Cincy scene from 1975 to 1982, the second installment picks up that thread and carries it from 1982 to 1988, with the stylistic evolutions of the Queen City underground evidenced across both LPs effectively mirroring those happening on a global macro level at similar points in time—mid-’70s proto-punk giving way to punk in the late ’70s and then post-punk soon after, hardcore identifying itself as a distinct form in the early ’80s, the burgeoning of college rock in the mid-to-late ’80s before that term became slander, etc. My interests in this area (both time and place) definitely fall more on the end of the spectrum cluttered with the so-agitated Buckeye skronk of bands affiliated with the Hospital Records label, and opener “Jerilyn” by COINTELPRO is quite possibly the Platonic ideal of that particular sound, with its strangulated guitar scrawl, broken-down disco beats, and restless, rubbery bass underpinning increasingly desperate and wound-up vocals. From that same gnarled family tree, BPA (a.k.a. BY PRODUCTS OF AMERICA) are the sole band afforded two tracks on the comp; the DEVO-esque deconstructivist rhythms of 1983’s “Bus” and PERE UBU-inflected hiccupping art-punk of 1985’s “No Heat” are both highlights here. Across the other sixteen cuts, there’s the speedy, ramshackle hardcore of SLUGGO and SS-20, KBD-worthy punk primitivism from MUSICAL SUICIDE, SNARE & THE IDIOTS, and MEXICAN PIG TORTURE, an early DREAM SYNDICATE-ish offering from post-COINTELPRO/BPA project the WOLVERTON BROTHERS, a teenage-fronted (and pre-CAROLINER!) avant-punk noise tantrum from MANWICH, and a number of points in between (or beyond)—something for slightly warped punks of all stripes.

Reviewer: Erika Elizabeth
Label: HoZac / Shake It!

V/A – What’s For Breakfast? Volume 1 EP

This is a pretty cut-and-dry affair—four songs from four Chicago bands pressed on a 45. Each of these groups offer statements of intent via eponymous songs, and they’re all solid, garage-inflected rock’n’roll endeavors. DOOMSDAY SLUTZ channel IRON MAIDEN through dual guitar leads chained to a sci-fi take on punk, while 96 COUGAR brings a wiry off-kilter energy to bar rock. Both WATERMELON and NIGHT-FREAK are game as well, with fairly no-nonsense, high-energy and melodically solid punk. All in all, this is a great scene report from one of the United States’ most storied music cities on the map. Good stuff.



Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: What’s For Breakfast?

WEEPCAR – So You Keep Your Eyes Closed at the End cassette

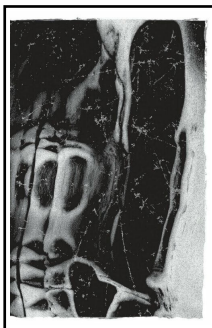
Five tracks of metallic hardcore from Tulsa, OK. WEEPCAR pulls from metallic hardcore bands like INTEGRITY and BLOODLET with some Gravity Records-style interlocking guitar work for a mix of brutality and introspection. WEEPCAR is strongest when the sound incorporates light skramz influences, like on “I Cannot Abide.” The minor-key guitar leads coupled with lyrics like “Twelve hours on the factory floor / The best paycheck I could’ve ever hoped for / It has me making the bombs that are dropped on kids / This is how I pay my bills” capture frustration and despair, ending with “I cannot abide / The hunger, the horror / I cannot abide / The slaughter, the lies.” The full-throated vocal delivery and chug-a-lug riffing might be a line in the sand for some MRR readers, but the upfront production and strong playing make for a good tape if you like capital-H hardcore.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: One Aux

WITHOUT SKIN – Collecting / Inner Debts LP

Man...if this past is the future? I am fukkn here for it. France’s WITHOUT SKIN delivers uncompromising heavy hardcore with metallic leads and meandering art/core riffs. Think of a time when ASSAULT, ANODYNE, TORCHE, and CAVE IN walked the earth and just destroyed shit, you know? That’s the energy I get from WITHOUT SKIN—power without pretense. The internet suggests that they’ve progressed considerably since 2022’s four-song assault *Ascents*, but it’s a progression that comes with an increased focus on the greater mission that lets them exude power in a manner of their choosing, you know? This one was extremely refreshing, highly recommend.

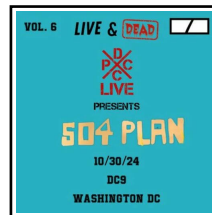
Reviewer: Robert Collins
Label: Crapoulet / Disque Ardent / Emergence / Klvr / Out of Thunes / Ribé / Skinless Asso / Sylvebarbe / Yoyodyne



504 PLAN – DCxPC Live & Dead, Vol. 6 LP

DCxPC Live has never let me down, and this time they’ve kicked it up a notch with a half-live and half-studio record. 504 PLAN, from DC, picks up where DOUBLE O, DEADLINE, ARTIFICIAL PEACE, MISSION IMPOSSIBLE, and LUNCH MEAT left off in the ’80s. Lyrically this is focused on issues that directly impact their lives, such as the poor DC school system, accommodations for students with disabilities, and the doomed thoughts of having to decide your life’s path before you are even close to adulthood and with limited life experience. The live side is charged and energetic with charming banter punctuating heavy topics. By the time you have read this, the band may have already graduated high school, broken up, and moved onto college or whatever, but none of that deters from the impact that these high school kids are having, or had, on their community. DCxPC has once again introduced me to a new band and has given me some hope for the under-eighteen punk kids that are just finding their voices.

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: DCxPC



ALAMBRE DE PÚAS – Que Mierda Esperan de Mi? cassette

Chilean twosome ALAMBRE DE PUAS are the sonic equivalent of barbed wire scraping on your eardrums. Their fourth EP *Qué Mierda Esperan de Mi?* is a disgustingly aggressive punk opus filled with political frustration. ALAMBRE DE PÚAS stay true to their roots with fast, distorted guitar riffs, explosive drums, and the rawest vocals known to man, just like they have accustomed us. Lyrically, the album tackles themes of nihilistic disillusionment, resistance, and inner struggles, with tracks like “Cállate” and “Y Que Me Importa a Mi?” standing out as anthems of nihilism. Punk driven by frantic mid-tempo beats that repeat and repeat on top of buzzing, brain-stomping guitars. Overall, a declaration of individuality, proving ALAMBRE DE PÚAS remain a force in punk. The artwork by member vocalist/guitarist Wati Bakan has a life of its own and further adds to the sonic violence and gritty aura.

Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Rock SVB



AMERETAT – Ameretat 12”

AMERETAT is formed by members of the Iranian diaspora who use their shared culture to influence their hardcore. AMERETAT uses the chaotic delivery of later anarcho-punk hitched to international hardcore, with the resulting sound reminding me of something between GEHENNA and DYSTOPIA. In fact, the second track, “Marg-e ye Doktor (Death of a Doctor),” has a very INTEGRITY-like style of delivery. Their self-titled 12” album is an eight-song journey that blends rage with despair, surging punk with plodding metallic breakdowns, and an extensive view of the world that westerners will never know. If you haven’t given AMERETAT a spin yet, then you need to immediately.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: La Vida Es Un Mus



ANOTHER FUCKING PROBLEM – Sunburnt Earth cassette

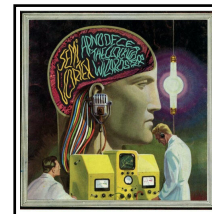
This one feels like (sounds like) a time machine dragging me back to pre-stadium-crust melodic, political D-beat bands from the turn of the century. ANOTHER FUCKING PROBLEM aren’t rehashing the past, though—check the middle of the title track to see (hear) a band using their own influences to influence a proven formula, and then hear them form brutal metallic breakdowns in “Never Knew Their Names” to know that they’re taking the listener out of a comfort zone. Blistering, bombastic hardcore with sinister femme vocals and a predilection for molding the sonic process to their own needs.

Reviewer: Robert Collins
Label: Noise Merchant



ARNO DE CEA & THE CLOCKWORK WIZARDS / SEMIVORTEX – split EP

Split EP offering two flavors of French instrumental punk-adjacent rock. On the A-side, ARNO DE CEA & THE CLOCKWORK WIZARDS shred through two tracks of trebly surf, with the intertwining leads, exotica-leaning chord progressions, and speed the genre is known for. The production has a live feel, which gives it a nice garage punk edge to the songs. “Apollon” ends with a noisy laser blast phaser breakdown while still retaining the



classic surf feel. Check it out if you're a hang ten type. SEMIVORTEX brings dissonant, math-influenced instrumental noise rock on the B-side, recalling the best of classic Load Records releases. There is a propulsive LIGHTNING BOLT-style build-and-release pattern on "Operatique" with as much metal chug as higher-pitched repeating patterns. Both sides are a win.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi

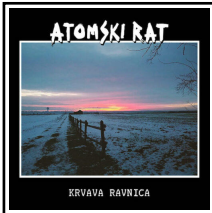
Label: Calico / Creepozoid Productions / Emergence / Friday Feeling / Happy Gary / Ronflex / Yoyodyne

ATOMSKI RAT – Krvava Ravnica cassette

The folk-ish intro leads the mind to an unpredictable landscape, not too distant from something DEAD CAN DANCE would do, but as soon as you start to wonder if you are playing the right record, ATOMSKI RAT drops the bomb on your ears. A barrage of noisy hardcore/thrash soon follows. This Serbian outfit perfect the art of playing thrashy, crusty riffs in the vein of heavyweights EXTREME NOISE TERROR, with a sensitivity towards darker melodies like Swedish champions WOLFBIGADE. In other words, this feels like a band that decided to only play the steady crust mid-tempo riffs from a grindcore album. And I mean that in a great way!

Reviewer: João Seixas

Label: self-released



BARCODE – Barcode cassette

Murfreesboro, Tennessee solo garage punk project. This is the debut release from BARCODE, which consists of four tracks of impossibly lo-fi recording quality. This tape is really interesting and the project seems like it could be very cool, but the lack of any sort of production makes it difficult to digest. Certain frequencies come through so harshly, mostly on the canned drums, that it becomes a bit of a chore to focus on and decipher, and I'm someone who loves when recordings are endearingly shitty. According to the label, all the tracks used on the four-track recording for this demo were recorded as voice memos on a phone. Perhaps that begins to explain why I have listened to it four times already and still can't fully wrap my head around what I'm listening to. That isn't to say that the songs are bad. Far from it, actually! The songwriting is pretty interesting, garage punk with drum machine dance beats and egg-punk chorus pedal twangy guitars. The vocals are delivered bizarrely lackadaisically, again perhaps due in



part to the recording method. All in all it sounds like an egg-punk lo-lo-lo-fi bedroom pop project. I can't wait for the recording setup to be upgraded in the slightest amount so that I can fully tell what BARCODE sounds like.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro

Label: Tennessee Cold Cuts

BESTA QUADRADA – Besta Quadrada LP

BESTA QUADRADA brings us a fresh helping of off-kilter noise out of Western New York. Moving between droning and lurching rhythms and explosive hardcore with dark undercurrents, the brief and artful songs on this debut LP spin a web of brooding potency. The dramatic vocal performance gets downright Kim Gordon-esque at times ("Spiral"), and then switches moods to capture even brattier and more sardonic tones ("Life of the Party"). Drenched in distortion, it sways and charges in unpredictable intervals, leaving the listener pleasantly dizzied in its wake.

Reviewer: Jason Harding

Label: Swimming Faith

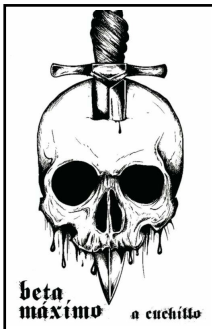


BETA MAXIMO – A Cuchillo cassette

BETA MAXIMO is the moniker for Javier Sánchez, a one-man operation who has been cranking out recordings for a good three years now, earning a spot in the wave of synth punk that has been showing up stateside from Europe. Where a band like CUIR takes synth pop and jams it full of anthemic punk and Oi! influences, or fellow Spaniards ZERO AZÚCAR very successfully blend it with pop punk sensibilities, BETA MAXIMO is more fixated in the early, robotic aura of early synth-pop and the work of absolute genre godfathers DEVO. From the delivery of (and effects on) the vocals, to leaning into the kind of synthesizer sounds that make you think of early keyboards and boxy robots, the result is pretty interesting. That's not to say you'll miss the guitars and punk rhythm as they are well-represented, but the emphasis is what differentiates this project in a good way. That same tendency may rob the songs of some of the catchiness of other current proponents of the "punk + Casio" sound, but proves effective regardless. US tape release of a digital EP cranked out in 2024.

Reviewer: Daniel Z.

Label: Knuckles on Stun

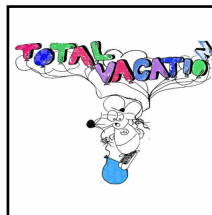


TOTAL VACATION – Balloons cassette

California's TOTAL VACATION packs up eleven short and sweet, full-throttle hardcore punk gems in their latest release, *Balloons*. It's not one of those records that takes itself too seriously and that's exactly why I love it. "Tough-guy hardcore" is good and all, but I think we need more of what TOTAL VACATION is bringing to the table: songs that are fun yet still grounded in the realities of the world. I personally love drum-dominated recordings, and this surely is one of them. It doesn't mean that it has anything lacking, though. The riffs and songwriting are incredibly fun and the energy of the vocals is just perfect for the sound. The muffled, lo-fi nature of the recording and occasional sloppiness definitely add to the raw energy of the record, too. If you are a fan of the JUDY AND THE JERKS and have been in the search of something to scratch that itch, definitely check out *Balloons*.

Reviewer: Mama Goblin

Label: self-released



UKRAINA – Polska Mafia Demo '84 EP

Raw, ripping hardcore from 1980s Polish straightedge punks. There's an obvious MINOR THREAT influence to the songs on this resurrected demo, but that's really just the jumping off point. UKRAINA takes a slightly more aggressive approach, with gruff vocals plastered across sharp riffs and full-throttle drumming. It's easy to see why this band became an inspiration for many young punks across Eastern Europe, and Refuse has done a fantastic job contextualizing their impact by including a rad booklet with the group's history.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel

Label: Refuse / Warsaw Pact



UNFORTUNATES – Ritual CD

A screeching sound that leaves one with anxiety can be heard, followed by reverberant tribal drumming with ethereal words being spoken through the winds. "A Machi's Premonition" sets the tone for the *Ritual* about to ensue. Machi is the shaman of the Mapuche people, an indigenous group living in south-central Chile and southwestern Argentina. UNFORTUNATES create post-punk leaning towards deathrock, not that distant from what French band BLEAKNESS does so well, but with very spiritual themes. Catchy, bleak, cold and captivating, this EP



puts a fresh, eerie twist on deathrock. With haunting, reverb-heavy vocals and a driving, bass-forward sound, they channel the spirit of classic goth and post-punk bands while adding a spiritual edge.

Reviewer: João Seixas

Label: self-released

V/A – Comp Punksylvania Live, Vol. 4 LP

There are two things to keep in mind when you read this review. The first is that this is a live record, but the sound is clear and the bands all deliver a high-energy performance that makes you feel like you are right there. The second thing is that I love this very, very much.

When I see a DCxPC record in my in box, I get stoked, and this one seems to have set a new bar for me. This has everything from goofy songs about by a person's husband being fucked by a werewolf (in the song "My Husband Got Fucked By a Werewolf" by the KARENS), to blazing thousand-mile-per-hour hardcore from SHIP OF FOOLS, to completely unhinged, blazing-speed ska hardcore oddballs the CHEMICAL IMBALANCE. All the bands turn in a top performance, so anything I call out is just the little bits that push this over the edge—SOJI, SUBURBAN DOWNGRADE, WORKING CLASS STIFFS. MARY SHELLEY brings in a B-52's and EPOXIES element that completely blindsided me with greatness. This is a great live comp with consistent sound quality and amazing song choices. So, here is the ultimate question of how I feel a compilation should be judged. Did this make me want to seek out new music by any band or bands I haven't heard or heard of until now? Yes it did, 100 percent. And sonuvabitch, now I have to go find the first three volumes, too.

Reviewer: Tony Party

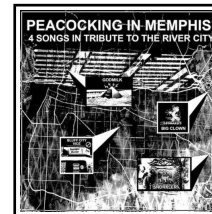
Label: DCxPC

V/A – Peacocking in Memphis: 4 Songs in Tribute to the River City EP

Four songs celebrating landmarks in Memphis, Tennessee. Not only do I love this premise for an EP, but each band really brought their own unique spin to each landmark or track. None of the bands were afraid to get a little weird, or mess around with electronics and faster-tempo punk. For me, the highlight was the vocals in "The Day They Took Baby Jesus Away," as they just got more and more unhinged, from growling to scream, as the track went on. Great tribute record.

Reviewer: Emma Miller

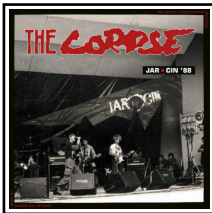
Label: What's For Breakfast?



THE CORPSE – Jarocin '88 LP

The CORPSE from Poland was a band I wasn't terribly familiar with before receiving this assignment. I couldn't find too much on them online, however they do have a pretty cool demo from '88 called *Fight Against Rules* that's worth checking out. Anyways, *Jarocin '88* is a pretty decent live recording of the band playing what was (according to some liner notes) potentially the first hardcore punk gig in Poland. The CORPSE plays a great set that showcases their thrashy speed and ferocity. Their sound has some obvious Japanese and UK influence (they have their own song called "Protestuj! Przeżyj," or "Protest and Survive"), as well as a little bit of rubbery surf guitar sprinkled in to nice effect. I don't know that I'd go so far as to say this is essential, but definitely an interesting recording worth a listen.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Warsaw Pact



THE GRIMLY PLEASED – I'd Be Delighted EP

I'm very pleased with this GRIMLY PLEASED four-song banger. This is sing-along-able, bouncy, simple, not changing any minds or breaking down any doors, and doing it all perfectly and loosely. This has elements of SICKO, the FEELIES, and the BANANAS while still retaining a sound of their own. Now I really want to go and check out everything I've missed from them.

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: self-released



THE MANKY MELTERS – Carry On CD

I confess that I have very few reference points here—the MANKY MELTERS self-describe as "Celtic folk-punk," and that seems about as good a summation as I could offer for these French rockers. I hear WORLD/INFERNO FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY, but that might be the violin and the vocals as much as the songs themselves... file this under "not my thing," but I'll be fukkd if I don't find myself humming these tunes (especially "Dirty Drunk") more than I ever would have expected. There are a couple of country/rock tracks ("Heat of the Moment," in particular) that offer a welcome respite; fans of accordions and anthems will rejoice here. Every song sounds like a protest, and I can get behind that shit.



Reviewer: Robert Collins
Label: Lart Scene Prod

THE PRIZE – In the Red LP

After a small string of killer singles and EPs, Melbourne's THE PRIZE reward (sorry...) the masses with their debut full-length and, as expected, it rules. THE PRIZE's sound is both distinct and timeless, immediately calling to mind the power punk sounds of the late '70s while also carving out their own lane half a century after the roots of their sound flourished in the underground. What's interesting here is that the band is able to take a sort of formulaic approach to their songs that, on paper, might sound like it could get repetitive, but this crew knows their way around a guitar lick and a chorus so well that every track feels fresh. The verses tend to be filled with staccato-delivered, almost sung-spoken lyrics, but that allows the more sing-songy choruses to land that much harder, and the guitar melodies travel up and down the fretboard providing so much dynamism that an amazing balance is actually created in partnership with the vocal delivery. To boot, they trade off lead vocal duties, which adds yet another layer to peel back as you go through all ten songs. Anywhere the needle lands on this record should satisfy, but the early single "First Sight" is indeed a modern-day classic.

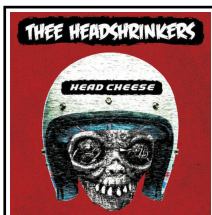
Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: Anti-Fade / Goner



THEE HEADSHRINKERS – Head Cheese LP

A bit craftier than it appears at a glance, this THEE HEADSHRINKERS album isn't just the latest round of BILLY CHILDISH-style beaters, but an overhead view of vintage guitar rock tradition through dark sunglasses. Boasting laidback garage grooves with an impeccable cool, these twelve solid songs turn their inherent simplicity into meditations of sophistication, often coming across like the musical lovechild of Mark E. Smith and Iggy Pop. Existing spiritually somewhere between the FUZZTONES and EDDY CURRENT SUPPRESSION RING, this stony stew would pair equally well with Saturday afternoon beers or Sunday morning espressos.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Property of the Lost



BLEAK STREAK – Bleak Streak LP

If any country has the melodic chops to churn out something you can easily describe as "dark power pop" and not have it suck, it would have to be Sweden. This Stockholm three-piece owes a lot to the KINKS and American power pop of the late '70s like BRAM TCHAIKOVSKY, but filtered through a darker, very Nordic sound. Think what TERRIBLE FEELINGS or BURNING KITCHEN did to punk, but done to something Paul Collins would write or GALAXIE 500 would play. The guitars bounce between jangling and distorting, the vocal delivery is decidedly exerted but somehow emotionally restrained (very Swedish, in my experience with their musical output at least). A very impressive collection of little details that wind up making power pop songs with a punkish edge that ebbs and flows depending on the feel of the song. I'm a sucker for good melodies, so songs on the poppier end of their sound (like album highlight "Dark") are more my bag, but even when they ride the accelerator or get a little somber, they deliver something their own and worthwhile. No filler here, a proper record of vinyl-worthy tunes.

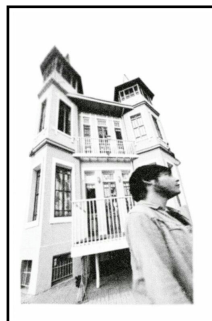
Reviewer: Daniel Z.
Label: Svart Ljud



BRIGADA SUBTERRÁNEA – Brigada Subterránea cassette

BRIGADA SUBTERRÁNEA from Santiago, Chile released this self-titled cassette over a year ago, but it still hits with a fresh dose of dark sound that is as much gothic punk as it is Oi!-inspired street punk, and it fucking rocks. The combo of overdriven, chorused guitars and gravelly vocals is great, but BRIGADA SUBTERRÁNEA also throws in some Tresillo rhythm and an incredibly intricate approach to song structure. This nine-song cassette is an absolute must-listen.

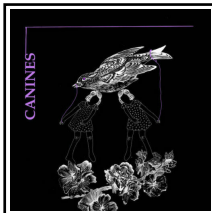
Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Instant Party / Rock SVB



CANINES – Canines demo cassette

I was really drawn to the grittiness of these tracks. The growling, disgruntled vocals really added to the atmosphere of unease that they created. Their cover of "A Forest" by the CURE (titled "Une Foreât" on their demo) caught me off guard in the best way; I didn't recognize it at first, but I really enjoyed their iteration of it, especially with the intensity of desire that built with the repetition of the word "again." There were a couple songs where I felt they built the tension super well, but then there wasn't quite the explosion that I had imagined. Regardless, I loved the grunting and growling and pure emotion in every track.

Reviewer: Emma Miller
Label: Mascara Rocks



CARNIVOROUS FLOWER – Carnivorous Flower LP

When I saw the name of the band, I immediately thought of Lance Hahn and J CHURCH, and after several seconds of research confirmed that there is a link between this and that. CARNIVOROUS FLOWER started as a J CHURCH cover band and evolved into something much more. CARNIVOROUS FLOWER features members of J CHURCH and AN UNEASY PEACE, and each member has been in bands that y'all prolly have records by. It sounds like if you were to take equal parts of the more melodic and gravelly bands on No Idea Records, the gravelly and melodic bands on Salinas Records, and J CHURCH catchiness, and puree that, pour it onto a sheet pan, sprinkle a bit of self-deprecating and self-aware humor, put it into a blast chiller for an hour, pull it out, and toss in onto the floor wherein you and handful of your pals pass around a spoon, then you'd have a great time making a memory while slurping up a great record. Also, the last track on the record makes the whole thing worth your money. CARNIVOROUS FLOWER did the best thing they possibly could do in honoring Lance, which is to become a really good band.

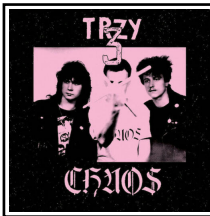
Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Dead Broke



CHAOS – Trzy LP

This is an unearthed and smartly-packaged demo from a late '90s Polish hardcore band. There is a late '70s crunch to these tracks that don't necessarily fit in line with what we typically think of '80s hardcore (at least in the States). But this is a cool document, a snapshot of a regional scene I frankly knew little about. The remastering is well-done, giving a nice saturated sound throughout that elevates what's there for a more contemporary-leaning ear. Nothing here is going to blow you away, but I'm always going to be excited by archival work like this. I'm grateful for a living punk history, a stream of time you can cup your hands into and drink deeply wherein every band holds a level of importance. No matter how small or underrated, so many bands were there laying it all down. That matters.

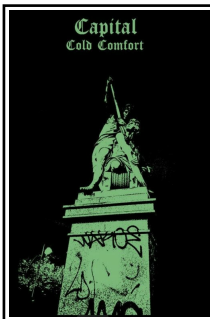
Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Warsaw Pact



COLD COMFORT – Capital cassette

Caps off to Ben Forrester from the northwest of the UK, whose bedroom project holds the stage with the confidence of a full crew. This is lo-fi hardcore that bridges the gap between the garage and the pit, a minor tightrope act that displays Forrester's balance and songwriting chops. Even with a DIY DAW setup, complete with programmed drums (I'm 98% sure), the throat-shredding aggression and misery is potent and bolstered by riffs that stick in your head. The vocal performance is unbridled and wild, and the overall sound is chaotic and noisy as far as production, but everything is also focused. Dialed-in to destroy. The world sucks, and this tape tells you just how much. With drum machine near-gabber madness like "Job On," this is an album that shows a remarkable amount of stylistic flexibility. A total blast from the bedroom.

Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Noise Merchant



CONFRONT – Guilty or Not Guilty? LP

Textbook Japanese hardcore from Mie. There was an EP ages ago and they kept popping up on comps (and in whippers), but if you're gonna wait twenty years before releasing your first full-length...make it sound like this. This is classic Burning Spirits-style 'core with sweeping leads and intense yowls shouted through a throat filled with gravel. The pace is as ruthless as the riffs, and there are faster tracks that owe to early DSB or INSANE YOUTH AD as much as the inevitable DEATHSIDE comparisons. It's been too long since I've blasted a record this complete.

Reviewer: Robert Collins
Label: Believe in Punk / Chaos is My Life / Harimau Asia



CORRECTIVE MEASURE – Not For You Not For Anyone LP

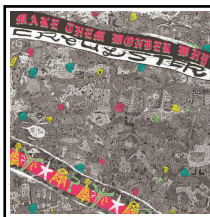
After a lengthy hiatus, CORRECTIVE MEASURE returns sounding particularly ticked-off on *Not For You Not For Anyone*. Hailing from Maine, the band's influences include a big range of East Coast HC, from classics like AGNOSTIC FRONT to later bands like RIVAL MOB. Funny enough, the intro track "Intro" has more of a street rock style, and once "The Show" started up, I was briefly reminded of the CHISEL, at least vocally. That kind of faded as the album went on though; this is USHC through and through. Good stuff and recommended.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Refuse



CRUELSTER – Make Them Wonder Why LP

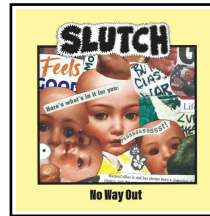
This is a great hardcore record. Hailing from the same Cleveland minds behind PERVERTS AGAIN and KNOWSO, CRUELSTER delivers straight-ahead '80s Midwest-style hardcore with 4/4 rhythms and shouted vocals. The band is so tight, playing precise power chord punk like the best of them, classic and simple as the RAMONES but somehow completely distinct in attitude. CRUELSTER is also fun and has hooks for days. There are numerous sound clips amongst the blasts that never get old, and even some melodic gang vocal choruses that are as catchy as pop punk without being cloying. As weird as it sounds, tracks like "Jerks" and "Now I'm Terrestrial" give pub-chorus POGUES vibes, while still retaining full-tilt hardcore



SLUTCH – No Way Out EP

Young (and I would like to emphasize "young," as the bass player is only twelve years old) Manunian band out via First Strike Records (their first new band signing in thirty-three years), a mythic label that Alan Woods of Alan's Records started in the '90s. So what is the fuss all about? Their music is very honest, a hard quality to have in this day and age, and it fluctuates between the aggressiveness of hardcore from the catalog of Dischord or SST and the guitar-driven noise experimentation of shoegaze and no wave. Opener "Will I Ever Leave" paints a dreamlike sonic picture that takes a page from MY BLOODY VALENTINE with its distorted guitars layered over dreamy vocals, and second track "Change Me" starts with a scream that could easily be on any DYSTOPIA record. There's a sense of reckless abandon in their sound, yet it's clear that every chaotic moment is crafted with intention. SLUTCH is a band that's impossible to ignore, and *No Way Out* paves the way for a bright future ahead!

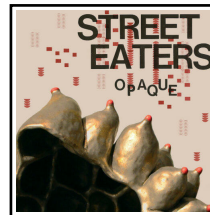
Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: First Strike



STREET EATERS – Opaque 12"

Rock-y garage punk. I loved the distorted bass and the combination of the change-up of vocals and more exploratory guitar in "No Excuse." I felt a lot of the tracks kind of sounded quite similar to me, and I found my focus drifting a bit. That being said, the feedback jam in the last track really brought me back.

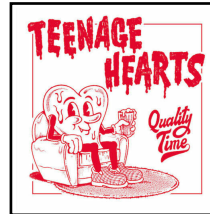
Reviewer: Emma Miller
Label: Dirt Cult



TEENAGE HEARTS – Quality Time EP

Sounding like if TUXEDO CATS hailed from France instead of Brooklyn, this EP is four tracks of snotty tunes of the highest order. Starting off with the power punk standout "Quality Time," the listeners are then reminded that this is indeed Nantes and not New York, as the next couple tracks up the French Oil energy with the absolutely rattling bass line of "Always Broke," the gruffer "Gotta Get Rid of You," and "T'es Sans Espoir" in their native tongue. These tracks are quick and without frills, and they leave you wanting to start from the top as soon as the last guitar rings out.

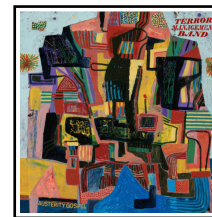
Reviewer: D. Gregory
Label: Joe Pogo / Primator Crew / Tough Ain't Enough



TERROR MANAGEMENT BAND – Austerity Gospel LP

This is the second LP from this Florida crew, featuring Mike Taylor of PALATKA fame. Everyone here's been in five other bands with names like MINIMUM RAGE or STAB THAT MOTHERFUCKER, so the pedigree is real. They bill themselves as "Southern Gothic noise rock," and what that translates to is 39 minutes of feedback, lurching riffs, and rant-sung vocals that evoke the experience of someone cornering you at a party to explain why everything is collapsing. The problem for me is momentum. When I think noise rock, I default to the AmRep strain of '90s bands that sounded relentless, punishing, always moving forward. *Austerity Gospel* doesn't really deliver that drive. Too often, the music sinks into plodding tempos without the weight that might make those moments feel crushing. Instead, some of these songs drift toward post-rock soundscapes. The second song "Minorcan" especially feels more MOGWAI than UNSANE, which for me blunts the record's impact. Not a bad album by any stretch, but it left me wanting more force, less drift. Maybe it's about expectations? Check it out if you're a fan of music that drifts between post-hardcore, post-rock, and noise rock without fully committing to any. "The Chisel" was probably my favorite track.

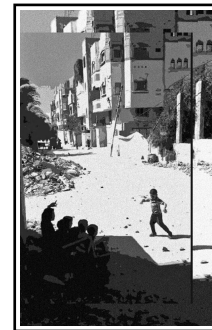
Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Belladonna



THE BURROW – Dance Dance Revolution / Like Real Liberty cassette

The BURROW out of Eugene, Oregon issued this two-track cassette a couple months back, with proceeds going towards aid agencies in Gaza. "Dance Dance Revolution" is a melodic, mid-paced Oil-inspired tune that is easily a sing-along, while "Like Real Liberty" uses a grittier guitar tone and espouses a slightly heavier inspiration. Both songs kind of have that BYO Records vibe from circa Y2K, but with a contemporary emotional tint.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: self-released



SHADOW RIOT – Quiet, Please! / Middleman 7"

DC post-hardcore band that sounds a lot like FUGAZI with more rock'n'roll swagger. On "Quiet, Please!" vocalist Kamyar evokes the pained emotion of Guy Picciotto, complemented with a hooky guitar lead and locked-in bass/drums cadence. On the B-side, "Middleman" starts with a funky slap bass that builds into a full-band punk outburst. Here, the vocals take on a Guy-meets-Jello Biafra warble that adds an element of chaotic excitement to an already tight recording. Crisply produced record that is a nice mix of Revolution Summer and right now.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Tino



SHRINKWRAP KILLERS – Feed the Clones Pt. 2 LP

This is a refinement to the highest degree of this project's original mission. Carrying on the baton of the SPITS' catchy post-apocalyptic brain damage rock, or at least hinting at it, this project carves its own identity as self-assured and grim pop songs (to a degree) buried in aeons of cosmic sludge. There's a theatricality to the proceedings in the best way possible, especially in more dirgelike fare like "Eminent Death," but there is nothing cornball here. The music is excellent, the melodies and harmonies laser-focused, and the scope has a space opera sheen even while keeping me mired in the muck of the gutter. If you'll indulge me, this feels like punk's answer to SLOUGH FEG's cosmic RPG concept record *Traveler*, but while that band is mighty if terminally uncool, this project manages to construct something no less epic but much more rad. The stabs of spooky Ed Wood synth queasily piercing the tight mutoid punk never grows old, and overall this is a wealth of ideas all in one majorly satiating package.

Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Carbonized



SICKNESS OF GREED – All That's Before Us cassette

Some people like to muse about the meaning of life, sometimes because they believe chin-stroking makes them look profound or because they have just listened to too much emo music (the punk equivalent of being fanatically into French existentialist authors). I have no idea if SICKNESS OF GREED thinks hard about the meaning of life, but they certainly nailed the meaning of LIFE. The name of this Austin band comes from a song from the Tokyo crust masters, so it already provides the listener with heavy clues as to what to expect (or to fear, if you still listen to too much emocore). They also nicked the COLLAPSE SOCIETY logo for their banner in case you're a bit slow. *All That's Before Us* is the band's first recording, and it showcases emphatically what they crave to achieve. The Japanese crust influence can be felt (BATTLE OF DISARM comes to mind), but can't be said to prevail on these eleven songs. I am getting a big '90s cavecrust vibe here, classics like '92 DISRUPT and HIATUS or Tom Croft-era DOOM have been sent invites, and so have more confidential orchestras like SARCASM or SAUNA and some '00s heroes like NUCLEAR DEATH TERROR or VISIONS OF WAR. This tape feels like an epic crust birthday party: you already know how much fun you're gonna have and it doesn't matter if it's the same as last year's. My only criticism has to do with some drumming parts that don't really go well with the flow or sound a little off-beat. But then it's a crust demo tape, so who expects seamlessness? Definitely up my alley.

Reviewer: Romain Bassot
Label: FAR Company / Filth Holocaust / Sore Mind



SLUTAVVERKNING – Skräp

I always do my best to go into reviews with an open heart and an open mind. Extreme music is a wide spectrum and I believe there's room for any and all kinds of styles, although that doesn't necessarily mean I'll like it. Per their Bandcamp, Sweden's SLUTAVVERKNING "explore the sweet spot between proletarian noise rock and unhinged acid jazz", and while this sounds intriguing, it's a swing and a miss for me. Initially, I was into the industrial rhythm section, but ultimately the vocals and woodwinds lost me.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Feral Cuts



aggression. Check this out and leave it on repeat for weeks.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: Convulse

DAZED PILOTS – Here's to Me cassette

Third release by Austrian garage punk duo. Five songs of grunge revival with simplistic riffs and mid-tempo drums. A few of the songs are more pop-oriented, while the remainder sound like full-on NIRVANA worship to me. It took me the entirety of the first listen just to be able to decipher the tiny logo of the record label associated with releasing this cassette. Eventually I figured it out, but the label not having the release on their site and the band not listing who released it on theirs proved incredibly unhelpful.

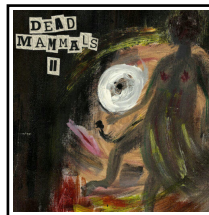
Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Itlis



DEAD MAMMALS – II LP

Engaging noise rock/heavy grunge record from this Rochester, UK band. Pulling from sounds like COP SHOOT COP and HELMET, the bass and drums lock together like a machine, as the vocalist moves from slurred sing/speaking into screaming with ease. Slow builds are key here, like on "Itch," which features an ominous mid-tempo chug, even through the eventual atonal guitar solo release. A few tracks like "The Ground Takes Anyone" and "Heir Sid" veer into grungy waters with loping minor-key guitar figures that crash into Big Muff crunch, not unlike vintage ALICE IN CHAINS. Big riffs and big moods abound for the rockers among us.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi
Label: House of Gain



DEATH SIDE – The Will Never Die 2xLP

If 2025 feels oppressively bleak and hope seems like a distant illusion, at least we have *The Will Never Die*. There have been a few iterations of this collection of singles, splits, and comp tracks tracing back to the late '90s, but La Vida Es Un Mus has assembled the definitive version here, gracing us with 40 cuts of crucial Burning Spirits hardcore across two LPs. Thoughtfully packaged in a gatefold sleeve and including a twelve-page booklet chock-full of band pics and fliers, this is like a (wasted) dream come true for pre-



tentious non-collectors who want to jam some of the most blazing hardcore to ever be committed to wax without having to pay out the ass for rare records from Japan. For those uninitiated, DEATH SIDE is arguably the quintessential Burning Spirits hardcore band, with their debut EP *Satisfy the Instinct* serving as the genre's seminal release. Infusing Japanese punk with NWOBHM guitar leads and accelerated tempos, the resulting sound is the embodiment of impassioned anger and self-empowerment. To call this epic would be a massive understatement. Mandatory punk shit here.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: La Vida Es Un Mus

DEATHTOLL – Lost Session '06 LP

An interesting double-barrel blast from the past from an all-star group of West Coast crossover legends. DEATHTOLL was a Bay Area hardcore outfit birthed from the lineage of ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT and had a couple releases in the early '00s. These eight tracks have been collecting dust since 2006 and feature the aforementioned band's comeback lineup as seen on *No Way Back* from 2011. I'm always curious how a record from twenty-ish years ago will hold up—stack onto that the fact that this is coming from a group who had made their mark twenty years prior to that with ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT's undeniable classic *American Paranoia*. I'll stop burying the lede and get to the point: *Lost Session '06* is a solid record. There's evidence of the crossover influence these folks helped pioneer, but less metallic with a touch of crust that was prevalent at the time. It's sick that these songs have resurfaced. A well-crafted batch of tunes that should provide ample fuel for bandana thrash aficionados to grab their decks and shred to.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: F.O.A.D.



DELETÄR / SKIZOPHRENIA – split EP

Two bands, two attitudes—this split comes out swinging. From France, SKIZOPHRENIA delivers snarling, crunchy hardcore with just enough melody to stick in your head but not soften the blow, though the vocals may sound annoying for some. "Needless" and "type" hit with laser-focus. On the flip, DELETÄR goes sharper and meaner: "La Balance et le Glaive" slices tension, "Funambule" barks with menace. The vinyl package (silkscreened sleeve, limited color press on red only available at live gigs) is DIY venom in physical form.

Reviewer: Gonza Perez
Label: Kick Rock

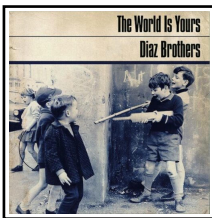


DIAZ BROTHERS – The World is Yours LP

Four great labels have their collective hands on this, so out of the gates, this has some weight to it before the needle even drops. The DIAZ BROTHERS come out swinging with melody and graveled vocals that include introspective lyrics. Easy comparisons would be LEATHERFACE and HOT WATER MUSIC. However, the hooks and melody, the lyrics, and their delivery go further than comparison and branch out to a new style of sound that can mirror that past while creating a new freshness.

Reviewer: Tony Party

Label: Break the Silence / Dead Broke / Serial Bowl / Waterslide

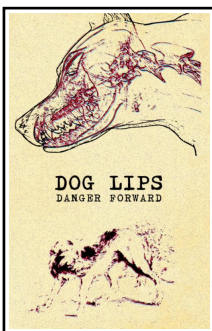


DOG LIPS – Danger Forward cassette

A nice mixture of new wave, post-punk, hard-core, and a hint of surf rock. There's a really solid juxtaposition between the music and the vocals; reverb-heavy sparkling guitars, fuzz-punched bass, and guttural-yet-melodic singing. The drums sit nicely in the pocket and keep everything moving and danceable. Sounds like JOY DIVISION smashed together with ANGELIC UPSTARTS. Catchy and charismatic as hell. This is well worth a play.

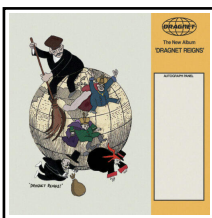
Reviewer: Jake Joyce

Label: Strange Mono



DRAGNET – Dragnet Reigns! LP

Third LP from Melbourne/Naarm-based DRAGNET. Sticking with their self-referential album titling (2019's *All Rise For Dragnet*, 2023's *The Accession*), we are presented with *Dragnet Reigns!* This six-piece fills every sonic space with peanut-butter-smooth bass, frantic yet precise drums, and gangly guitar riffs often as call-and-response with a jittery, eardrum-stabbing synth, all under the hypnosis of Jack Cherry's (VINTAGE CROP) vocal conducting. Did I mention sax? Yeah, that's in there too. All very of-the-moment Melbourne. This album marks a change-up, with Kailey Dick and Lisa Rashleigh (DELIVERY, SOURSOB) taking over for Meaghan Weiley and Alicia Nolan. Along with Tom Wooddruff (GONZO), this group is certainly filled out with heavy-hitters from (perhaps) Australia's most prolific city. While they mostly deliver beat-driven, structured songs, I really enjoy the theme-di-



vergent "Heroic Dose" that has single notes/beats/trills played by each instrument, one by one, under spoken word manifesto-poetry. Give this one a rip.

Reviewer: Willis Schenk

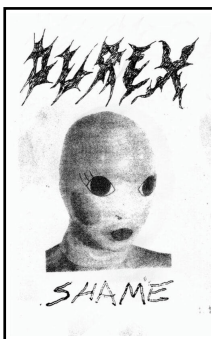
Label: Spoilsport

DUREX – Shame cassette

Montreal freak punx follow up their 2023 demo and, yeah, DUREX still fucks. Ripping hardcore punk that flirts with Scandinavian punk, but lands somewhere between KREMLIN and DE-TESTATION. Fierce and angry, yet perhaps not taking themselves too seriously which makes this both savage and fun. Eight direct cuts of go-for-the-eyes noisy punk. Blast this loud!

Reviewer: Matt Casteel

Label: Broken Skull / Noise Merchant



EASY GOAT – Zehr Goat! cassette

I don't want to say you owe me one, but I listened to this so you don't have to. EASY GOAT is a lounge jazz/post-punk group from Stasbourg, and this tape is fucking annoying. Opening track "I Want a Dyke for President" has falsetto singing like children attempting opera, laser gun sound effects, and a honking clarinet as backing to spoken word poetry about presidential candidates. It doesn't come across as edgy or as fun as the band seems to think and is a tedious five minutes. There is a rousing disco beat and sequencer pattern on "White Cis Het Nightmare Song" that is immediately ruined by more sing-song falsetto. Did you ever want to hear "Money (That's What I Want)" played with too much cowbell? Me neither, but it's on here. Maybe (and it's a big maybe), if you like the RESIDENTS or want to get out of an apartment lease really quickly, check this out. Everyone else, steer clear.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi

Label: Chrüsimüsi



S.G.A.T.V. – Collected Recordings 2020–2023 cassette

Complete discography of a solo new wave project from Frauenfeld, Switzerland. Killer songwriting, mostly driven by synth and drum machine. Stylistically S.G.A.T.V. is all over the map. Spastic, eggy punk riffs, catchy dreamy synth pop, danceable club music licks somehow tastefully crafted into driving synth-heavy disco punk songs. Is that a damn thing? Well, it is now thanks to S.G.A.T.V. There's a slow progression to these songs that reads like storyline-driven songwriting. It adds an epic feeling to these songs, as if they were written to be in some sort of new wave freaker musical. Apparently this discography cassette was released for this solo recording project to do a two-week Euro tour as a full six-piece band. Holy hell, I would absolutely have loved to see how these songs were recreated live. The fine folks over at Chrüsimüsi Records really pulled out all the stops with this release. In my thirty-some years of listening to music on cassettes, I have never seen one with printing in this manner. Black-and-white artwork printed on both sides of the shell of the tape itself in a way that I can't quite tell how it was done. Intriguing and awesome, which are also adjectives I would use to describe S.G.A.T.V.

Reviewer: Biff Bifaro

Label: Chrüsimüsi



S.Y.P.H. – Pst LP reissue

Welcome reissue of this cult Dusseldorf band's 1980 LP. This collection of unpolished, exploratory jams takes as much inspiration from the era's punk as it does krautrock (CAN's Holger Czukay produced and released the record on his label), early post-punk, and Neue Deutsche Welle, with a healthy sprinkling of Dada weirdness. Loose experimentation runs through all the songs, starting with the banging studio mischief of "Euroton" into the fuzzed-out, repetitive psych trip of "Einsam in Wien (Lustlos)," "Moderne Romantik" is the most traditional punk track, although its economical chord strikes and off-kilter rhythms place it more with WIRE or GANG OF FOUR than the band's earlier records. "Lametta" opens with rhythmic cadence and unsettling childlike vocal chanting that sounds like stumbling upon a clandestine komische drum circle in the woods. Even farther out is "Regentanz," a nearly nine-minute, mostly instrumental Farfisa, bass, and trumpet trip that will make your brain melt and your toes tap. Rounding out an unusual record is perhaps the weirdest song: "Do the Fleischwurst," a funky synco-pated punk-disco track devoted to German bologna. This is a great LP that snapshots punk in many forms and comes highly recommended.

Reviewer: Nick Odorizzi

Label: Tapete



SCRAPPED PLANS – Buddy Buddy Belgium LP

This record is brought to you by a sort of pop punk supergroup featuring Grath Madden (the STEINWAYS, ROBOT BACHELOR, etc.), Michelle Shirelle (the STEINWAYS, HASTY), Fraser Murderburger (the MURDERBURGERS, WRONG LIFE, the PHASE PROBLEM), Kieron Jordan (DON BLAKE), and, of course, Mikey Erg (every other band on the planet). The TL;DR story here is that this sounds like a deliciously balanced mix of the STEINWAYS and the MURDERBURGERS, but that simplification would betray the quality of this project. Two pillars hold this up: songcraft of the highest order by people who love the melodic side of punk rock so fucking much, and the fun they probably had making this record. The songs sound like they just came together with clever hooks and catchy melodies out of an epic hangout session, which from what I've read is kind of what happened. Standout tracks for me are the ones that spotlight Michelle Shirelle (one full-band and one acoustic), but as a long-time enjoyer of the work of everyone in this band, this was tailor-made for me.

Reviewer: Daniel Z.

Label: Bloated Kat

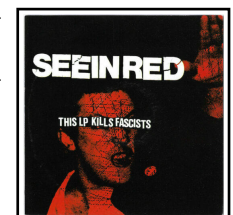


SEEIN RED – This LP Kills Fascists LP

A long-overdue vinyl release of SEEIN RED tracks from 2001–2003 that were originally released on compact disc in 2004 to coincide with a Brazilian tour. To fit on vinyl, they had to shave off a few cuts, so what we have here are 35 tracks of timeless, political hardcore punk. I've had the privilege of seeing the band live a few times, and these tunes capture their energy and vigor well. Fast as fuck and absolutely pissed at the state of things (still sadly poignant twenty-plus years on), this is the perfect encapsulation of why punk remains relevant, both as musical genre and as a social movement. While they don't sound much like LOS CRUDOS, I think of SEEIN RED in a similar way—true classics of the modern era. And to top it off, they're still going strong to this day, having released a killer LP just last year. Uncompromising and unyielding, SEEIN RED offers a blueprint for life-long dedication to DIY punk.

Reviewer: Matt Casteel

Label: Crucial Response



POINT OF NO RETURN – The Language of Refusal LP

Veterans of Brazilian hardcore who refuse to stay quiet. After years of silence, POINT OF NO RETURN returns with a sharp political blade: themes of labor, ecology, colonial injustice, authoritarianism; the record cuts deep. The riffs are heavy, often a metallic mosh, and gang vocals ring with communal anger. It's straightedge ethics married to global struggle. The production is punchy but raw enough to keep the edge. This isn't nostalgia and it isn't safe—it's a summons.



Reviewer: Gonzala Perez
Label: Refuse

PRIMITIVE IMPULSE – Piss It Away LP

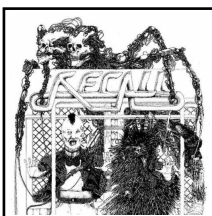
Raw, rock'n'roll-fueled hardcore from OH that feels both spontaneous and deadly precise. *Piss It Away* is pure sonic confrontation: dirty guitar tone, shouted vocals, and manic tempo shifts that teeter on collapse. There's something distinctly late-'80s about their approach—channeling bands like POISON IDEA or early ZEKE, but with a modern production bite. It's loud, dangerous, and catchy as hell. The title track sums it up: burn bright, burn fast, piss it away, but make it count.



Reviewer: Gonzala Perez
Label: Feel It

RECALL – Corpse EP

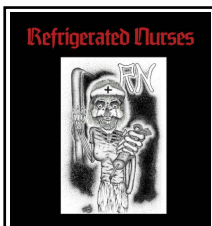
There must be something in the water (or more likely in the cheap beer) in Montreal, because new punk bands seem to spring to life there everyday. I had not heard of RECALL, but am familiar with some of the other bands the members are involved in. You can tell that their sound has been carefully thought out, especially the guitar tones, and it is, overall, a well-crafted EP. However, if it sounds good, I am a little confused about what they are actually trying to achieve in terms of genre. There is a D-beat element to be sure, but the production and the vocal flow and tone don't really fit with the style. It lacks that raw brutality one associates with the D, and while I assume American hardcore is still the prime influence, I don't think RECALL quite got that balance between both worlds. I am not a USHC fan so I might be missing the point completely, but it doesn't do it for me.



Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: 11 PM

REFRIGERATED NURSES – Democracy's Hands: Cooking the Chili 1991–1992 2xLP

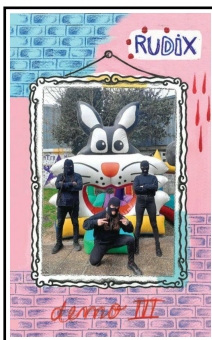
Touted as "Northern Arizona's first punk and hardcore band," REFRIGERATED NURSES recorded two demos in the early 1990s, and here they are, forever preserved on red, black, and splattered white vinyl. The band had a bristling and speedy hardcore approach not too dissimilar from that of UK fastcore icons HERESY and CONCRETE SOX, powered by youthful enthusiasm and played with an unpolished DIY spirit. Of all the "high school band memories"-type releases out there, this one has the best song by far to reference chili-making as a metaphor for painful teenage angst.



Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: self-released

RUDIX – Demo III cassette

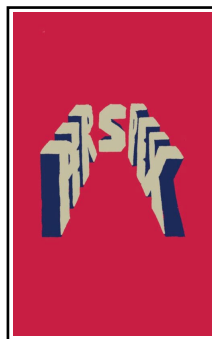
Four songs of revved-up, spastic, twangy, bratty punk from Buenos Aires, Argentina. Absolutely outstanding. Checking out *Demo I* and *Demo II*, there isn't much of a departure on this third batch of songs, which is just fine by me. If it ain't broke, right? There's absolutely nothing that needs fixing with RUDIX. Sometime between the first demo and the third, the band added a member, becoming a three-piece band instead of a two-piece. The earlier recordings have bass on them as well, so I assume it's mostly a live change, or perhaps to bring another cook into the kitchen for writing purposes. Give these four songs a chance if you have any amount of spare time. Seriously, the longest of the four songs clocks in at one minute and three seconds. Hell, you can listen to the entire recorded output by RUDIX in approximately sixteen minutes...and I highly recommend that you do just that.



Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Rock SVB

ELECTRIC PRAWNS 2 – Perspex cassette

A real wild, tripped-out experience awaits you with the second release by ELECTRIC PRAWNS 2, although it doesn't say that name anywhere on the cassette's artwork. Driving garage punk, plodding post-punk, weirdly beautiful pop-psych, ELECTRIC PRAWNS 2 touch on all of these subgenres and more throughout the odyssey of this release. This is not going to be palatable for all of you dear MRR readers who surely have greatly reduced attention spans from all the years you've spent huffing inhalants or damaging your brains in some other way. With six of this tape's nine songs pushing or surpassing four minutes in length, it's sure to be off-putting for those preferring their punk songs short and sweet. Personally, I say buckle in, dim the lights, and enjoy the journey. The tape starts off sounding like if EDDY CURRENT SUPPRESSION RING was a full-on post-punk band. I'm sure part of that comparison is coming because ELECTRIC PRAWNS 2 are also from Australia, but it's more than just that. As the tape continues into its more out-there realm, you end up with tracks sounding like JOHN'S CHILDREN, Mark Bolan's pre-T. REX mod-rock band. The only thing that truly isn't for me on the tape is the final track, which is an incredibly long acoustic guitar sing-along number likely intended to be a LOVE-inspired track rather than some hippie nonsense, but maybe take an early exit from this rollercoaster ride, skipping the final lap to avoid that one.



Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Knuckles on Stun

EXCREMENT – Excrement LP

Granted, an EXCREMENT shirt would be difficult to wear in most social gatherings, and if you wear one at your niece's graduation, you might get some pretty nasty looks from your uncle. The same goes for a job interview. Although it might depend on the job you're applying for. It does send a strong message. EXCREMENT was a very obscure band from Sapporo City, active in the '00s, and if you heard of them before the release of this discography LP, then you deserve the much-coveted 2025 Punk Nerd Award. The label did a great job describing the noise, but let's reformulate. The band played '80s-style Japanese hardcore with a "distort Japan" major, blending the more traditional local sound of early LSD with the Bristol-loving style of CONFUSE, GAI, and some modern heirs like DUST NOISE or GLOOM. It's got that primitive, bellicose vibe, angry vocals, and the emphatic distorted guitar, implying that the crust pants legion would be



into this (and the name will definitely not scare them), but it keeps the stomping hardcore vibe. The LP includes several recording sessions, but the mastering does a great job at equalizing everything and you don't get that patchwork feel. I do enjoy it a lot, because EXCREMENT hypnotises the listener through relentless noise and proper aggression (it is admittedly a pretty intense listening experience). Certainly not for everyone, but whether you like being deafened by distortion or not, the archaeological work of General Speech must be commended.

Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: General Speech

FILTH-KIN – Druid Gutter Crusters cassette

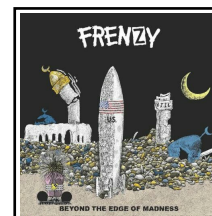
When I get assigned a release on Phobia Records, I always get ready for some heavy, dark, punishing, pummeling musical bollocking, and it is more often than not a pleasant, if exhausting, experience that I love to repeat. And let's not beat around the bush here: Sweden's FILTH-KIN is crust as fuck. On the one hand, they do play gruff, heavy old school crust that abides by the sacred guidelines, but on the other, they are also different in that they include a dirty, organic-sounding, almost psychedelic stoner influence to their cavemen music. The band is made up of members of WARCollapse, a long-running, well-established crust band that was always openly into weed and wrote some longer songs suiting that hobby. I suppose FILTH-KIN is a project meant to illustrate perfectly the basis of "stoner crust" (or perhaps "crust for stoners") if it were a genre. As mentioned, the band uses a lot of WARCollapse's old tricks (to my delight), but it sounds dirtier and I am also reminded of more groovy metallic bands like DEPRESSOR, DAZD, or ALEHAMMER. And for your discomfort, FILTH-KIN also adds weird interludes to create an atmosphere of unease and dementia and basically makes you feel like that weed might be too strong after all. Heavy, primitive, dark, rocking cave-crust with a penchant for the herb. I'm into it.



Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Phobia

FRENZY – Beyond the Edge of Madness LP

Hardcore with an Oi!/D-beat edge. The singer has an Ian MacKaye quality to him, but is a little too laid back to be completely spot-on. Power chords galore here, which isn't always a bad thing, but it's harder for these songs to stick to my ribs when both the guitars and vocals lack anything to sink my teeth into. The band is super



tight though, and the kind of act I'd love to see live. The boots-and-braces crowd will eat this up. Apologies for all of the food metaphors.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Distort Reality

GLITTERFAST – Glitterfast EP

Tokyo's GLITTERFAST hits us with a punk rock blast of rare pedigree. With a blunt and blaring garage style in the shining spirit of the RAYDIOS and TEEN-GENERATE, these guys are no frills and all kills. The songs couldn't be more straightforward ("Japan-punk," "Faster, Louder"), nor are they in need of any excessive decoration. Hell, they could barely be bothered with sleeve art. They're just playing that wild O.G. rock'n'roll in the vein of other modern-day torch-carriers ANGEL FACE (featuring the mighty Fink himself), helping to keep the dream alive. God bless 'em—it rules.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Slovenly

GRENAT – Despite the Sound of Sirens cassette

Release number five from Mascara Rocks, the DIY feminist punk label out of Paris. I imagine GRENAT is also Paris— or at least France-based, but there's not much info on the band, and as far as I can tell, this is their debut EP. Vague semantics aside, the music is a lovely '90s pop/grunge/garage/slacker (think BREEDERS) throwback, full of angst, like the opening track "20 Years Old." Songs are catchy, with vocals more on the sweet than melancholic side. They chug along mid-tempo, pretty straightforward, tossing in quiet bass-and-drums sections followed by loud, whole-band energy—the sluggish, lamenting outro on "Pretty" is also a fun surprise. Need a pick-me-up? GRENAT will do the trick.

Reviewer: Willis Schenk
Label: Mascara Rocks



HARAM – Why Does Paradise Begin in Hell LP / ليش الجنة بيتبلى في الجهنم؟

HARAM returns with *Why Does Paradise Begin in Hell?*, their first full-length in years, and it's as devastating as expected. Rooted in hardcore punk but saturated with emotional and political urgency, the album blends Arabic and English lyrics to explore themes of displacement, faith, and fury. The New York band continues to redefine what hardcore can sound like—unapologetically personal and raw, with production that feels like a live explosion in a basement show. Toxic State presents the album beautifully: chaotic layout, bold visuals, and music that refuses silence. Essential modern hardcore.

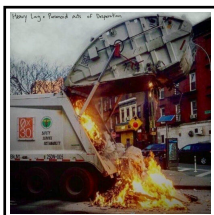
Reviewer: Gonza Perez
Label: Toxic State



HEAVY LAG – Paranoid Acts of Desperation cassette

This Brooklyn crew cranks through five angsty tracks that equally have the focused intensity of DILLINGER FOUR or MARKED MEN and the pop and spark of SQUIRTGUN mixed with the spirit of MEAN JEANS. "That Girl" and "Sleep/Wake" rip with the distorted energy and fuzzed vocals of early F.Y.P that feels unrestrained in its enthusiasm. Tracks like "Hüsker Dön't" and "I Don't Wanna Be Around (You)" prove the band can write melodies with bite in a Greg Sage/WIPERS kind of way.

Reviewer: Tim Janchar
Label: Bloated Kat



HUMBLE BEGINNINGS – Overanalyzing the Manifestations of the Unconscious 12"

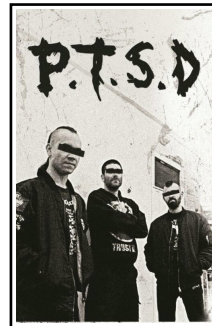
This, to me, has a very '90s pop punk flavor. I mean, this is a reissue from 1998, and by the time that you read this there is a high chance that this will already be sold out, but it is aurally transportive back to '90s pop punk. This release is a terrific footnote to plop in with BUGLITE, SLEEPASAURUS, WESTON, PLOW UNITED, and so on. If you were around in the late '90s NJ scene and missed out on this piece of history, you now have a chance to amend those poor life choices. If you are interested in '90s NJ pop punk and have always wondered what



P.T.S.D. – P.T.S.D. cassette

I have been a sucker for Greek crust for a long time, and beside the obvious aesthetic pleasure, overplaying XAOTIKO TEAOΣ or ΞΕΧΑΣΜΕΝΗ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΙΑ taught me to decipher some Greek words (or at least taught me to pretend I am able to, which is almost as good). I had not heard of P.T.S.D. previously, but they were involved in the Studio Spiritokouto Squat in Larissa and seem to have a strong local following, and this is a tape repress of their first EP. The band plays solid metallic crust with energy and anger, blending different shades of crust from apocalyptic stenchcore to more thrash-oriented metal punk or beefy crustcore. What I love here is that P.T.S.D. do it seamlessly—it sounds very natural, their style just flows and you do not get that patchwork impression that some bands aiming for the same result unfortunately convey. This EP will appeal to fans of metallic dis-core like HEL-LKRUSHER, '10s stenchcore like FATUM, or classic Greek crusty punk like NAYTIA. I just wish the band sang in Greek because I feel the language goes so well with the genre, but besides that, it is an excellent release from Nothing to Harvest. Keep an eye on this band.

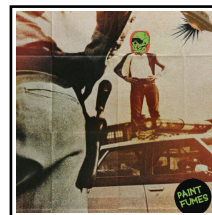
Reviewer: Romain Basset
Label: Nothing to Harvest



PAINT FUMES – Crime of Love / Try Me 7"

Absolutely fantastic slab, kicking off with "Crime of Love" which sounds like all of the best parts of FIDLAR and MASKED INTRUDER smashed together. "Try Me" is a classic doo-wop romp with raw, screaming vocals and a blistering guitar solo halfway through, reminding me a bit of BOMB THE MUSIC INDUSTRY! This is a very strong outing and I would highly recommend it.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Slovenly



PAŹDZIERNIKOWY GRAD – Worki Na Śmieci Z Uszami CD

Upon receiving this album to review, I translated the title and "Bags for Garbage with Ears" was the result. So far, so good! Polish group PAŹDZIERNIKOWY GRAD wastes no time and goes straight for it. Very straightforward, short, street-punk-esque "two-riff" tunes with some accordion thrown in for good measure. Most of the tracks are like this with some exceptions—"Pedofil" starts with ominous doomy chords just to unpredictably explode into blastbeats, going into grindcore-adjacent territory. Eighteen tracks in thirty minutes, would fit perfectly with a post-soccer match brawl.

Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: 5Records



PERIPETIJA – Zar Nisi Besan LP

Fairly standard politically-minded straightedge hardcore from Serbia's PERIPETIJA. Everything here is done well enough, and there's a clear penchant for Boston HC in particular, as evidenced by the NO TOLERANCE cover. From what I understand, this is four tracks from a demo, six new ones, and that cover. Not bad, but not particularly life-changing.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: In My Heart Empire / Mind Eraser / Refuse



PLASMA – Mua Et Voi Omistaa LP

Finnish punk architects PLASMA hit the ground running. Their debut LP is frothing with swagger, doing the "classic yet fresh" thing effortlessly via ten tight cuts. Loaded with poison-tipped tupa-tupa and head-bobbing hardcore style, this hits all the right spots for a stunning first impression. Bouncy bass, bumping drums, malicious licks, and a lovely punk sneer—everybody's on fire here.

Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Little Jan's Hammer / Nunchakupunk / Sorry State



NEYPA – Neypa cassette

If you like furious, absolute rage-fueled hardcore, then you've got to check out NEYPA from Greece. Even the instrumental opener of their self-titled cassette sounds pissed-off. This three-piece tears through eight songs with the virtuosity of warriors and an impossibly dense delivery. Warp-speed guitars, intriguing breakdowns, and intense vocals make NEYPA a true hardcore unit. The song "ΦΩΤΙΑ ΣΤΑ ΣΑΛΑΝΙΑ ΣΑΖ" goes crazy and has a cool doom-inspired riff in the middle—seriously, just go check NEYPA out.

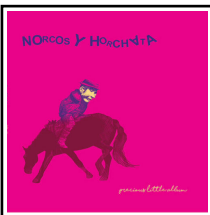
Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Nothing to Harvest / Studio From the Down



NORCOS Y HORCHATA – Precious Little Album LP

Solid Americana-infused street punk. Reminds me of AGAINST ME! and BOMB THE MUSIC INDUSTRY! mixed with the BRIEFS and ABRASIVE WHEELS. Like the aforementioned BOMB THE MUSIC INDUSTRY!, NORCOS Y HORCHATA stretches past the typical punk tropes and introduces longer, more experimental hooks and bridges laced with synthesizers and cherubic gang vocals. As always, I'm partial to any band drenched in Midwestern references, which we see in songs like "Lake Ave. Traffic" and "Carbondale"—the latter being a nod to growing up in a robust DIY scene, longing to return to that moment at an older age, and finding an entirely different scene later in life (at least that's what I gathered). Maybe I'm projecting! Lovely work here.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Eccentric Pop / Rust on the Blade / Take the City



NORM DOGS – Electric Light EP

Here's a self-recorded treat of scrappy, energetic punk with a certain breezy lilt to it and incredible sense of melody. Propulsive and well-read, this no-frills Danish group is rich with ideas. The bass lines are nimble and play nice with the alternately chiming and dissonant guitar, the drums are pocketed, and everyone in the band contributes to vocals which are rich and witty. This is all-around well-packaged rock that sits in the comfy between spaces of harder-edged indie with some punchy power pop tendencies. Truly delightful, snappy stuff.



Reviewer: Luke Henley
Label: Flexidiscos

OII!TAKUS / THE SPIKY TOPS – Operation Pogo split EP

Listen, I know I'm only supposed to focus on the music here, but I need to get something off my chest, because I see this happening more and more and if this review can help change even one mind then my job is done. If you choose to do a split with another band, it completely defeats the purpose of doing it if you upload both halves to different Bandcamp accounts. It even makes less sense if you don't link the listener to the other side within the same page. The whole idea of a split is to expose your listeners to a completely different band. If I have to actively search where to find the flipside of a record, then the experiment has failed. With that being said, OII!TAKUS plays a generic form of neckbeard street punk chock-full of anime references, and SPIKY TOPS play a generic form of power pop street punk chock-full of your typical punk tropes, and both bands sound like the type of punk act you'd see on some Nickelodeon show like iCarly. Seems like they had fun, though.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: 4D Kidz



OK BUCKO – Ok Bucko cassette

One of my favorite aspects of OK BUCKO was their lyricism, specifically in the track "Debt" with the line, "Getting older is just writing checks." The A-side of the cassette was much stronger for me, as the other two tracks on the B-side didn't have a super unique standing, but I really liked the variety that was on the A-side. The more experimental vocals with a groovy beat in "Bad Dreams Pt. 1" was a great transition into a slower, more shoegaze-esque atmosphere in "OTA." Overall, these guys are a great solid rock band!

Reviewer: Emma Miller
Label: Youth Riot



it sounded like in the '90s, you now have a chance to be that person, too.

Reviewer: Tony Party
Label: Dead Broke

JJ AND THE A'S – Rhetoric of Trash LP

Denmark's JJ AND THE A'S don't ape their inspirations. Instead, their well-digested influences are spewed forth as unique refreshments for the chronically bored. Sleek, synth-laden melodies create musical mood lighting, effortlessly hauling hunks of dramatic discontent via poetic lyrics. This twelve-track album's playful cover art with a tapestry of doodles, amongst which the word "punk" is written four times, the word "psycho" is written no less than four times, and "RAMONES" is inexplicably featured once, is somewhat misleading, as the contents within don't quite match its perceived whimsy. The songs have the inherent urgency of punk, the dexterous weight of deathrock, and the powerful brevity of hardcore at once, resulting in a formidably heavy trip. Regardless of your particular interests, it would be a feat to listen to this whole thing all the way through without being sucked into its magnetic distinction at least a little bit.

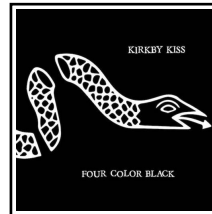
Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: La Vida Es Un Mus



KIRKBY KISS – Four Color Black LP

KIRKBY KISS's second full-length *Four Color Black* serves as a journey back to the hardcore sound of the early '90s, tapping into that potent blend of dissonance and unpredictability. From the first track, it's clear the band is channeling the chaotic power of acts like BOTCH or DEADGUY without straying too far from hardcore roots, from BAD BRAINS to FUGAZI. What really stands out is how KIRKBY KISS manages to weave the complexity of emotions into their sound. It's not just about power or anger, it's about connection, vulnerability, and coming to terms with the darker aspects of life. The album closer, "Am I Seeing This Clearly," features none other than JJ Janiak from the godfathers of hardcore DISCHARGE, alongside some synth work by JP Parsons from FALSE FED (who Janiak also sings for).

Reviewer: João Seixas
Label: Council



KISSLAND – Girls Mignon EP

A novel take on fastcore from Melbourne, bringing to the table the speed and fury you would expect from a 625 release, but with an infusion of...garage punk!?! Catchy, major-chord riffs subvert the formula in the best way. *Girls Mignon* is an eight-minute whirlwind, clocking eleven songs of the friendliest thrash I've heard. Throw KISSLAND on a bill with HOLY SHIT! and put me on the guest list please. Total scorcher!

Reviewer: Matt Casteel
Label: 625 Thrashcore



KNEE – Knee cassette

The first four tracks from Brisbane's KNEE. Gnarly and dark-edged, this is tough, mid-paced garage punk that infuses the spirits of the MISFITS with the stoner metal stomp of ZIG-ZAGS for a smooth, ripping ride. Definitely crank it.

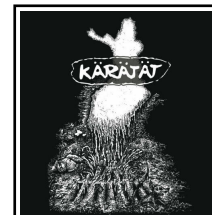
Reviewer: Jason Harding
Label: Knuckles on Stun



KÄRÄJÄT / PUUKKOJUNKKARI – split EP

Ultra-abrasive split that's over as quickly as it starts. On the A-side is Finland's KÄRÄJÄT, who play punishing noise punk and whose longest song is 57 seconds (the shortest is 13 seconds). They have six songs on their side, a pretty impressive feat for a 7". On the B-side, PUUKKOJUNKKARI from Brazil plays equally as caustic if not slightly more coherent hardcore on their five songs. Not gonna lie, this shit is wild, and while not entirely in my wheelhouse, I like it.

Reviewer: Eric Anderson
Label: Kännikana



LAS ÁNIMAS DEL CUARTO OSCURO – Las Ánimas Del Cuarto Oscuro 12" reissue

LAS ÁNIMAS DEL CURATO OSCURO formed in Mexico City in the latter half of the 1980s. Although short-lived, the band, through earlier adoption of post-punk and gothic rock, inspired a burgeoning underground of dark rockers. Originally released in 1988, the eight-song full-length *Las Ánimas Del Cuarto Oscuro* was self-released and distributed by the band. However, now in 2025 it is available for international purchase through the wonderful humans at La Vida Es Un Mus. This lovingly reproduced 12" captures the gritty, cool swagger of LAS ÁNIMAS DEL CURATO OSCURO with perfect accuracy. Guitar riffs that drift into focus and fall away, synthesizers that scream with intergalactic melancholy, and a tight, danceable rhythm section form songs that are constantly shifting jams. All this variety is crystalized into structure through lyrical themes that capture the various aspects of a relatable disaffected adolescence. In total, *Las Ánimas Del Cuarto Oscuro* is an astounding listen from start to finish.

Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: La Vida Es Un Mus



LAVENDER JETS – Junk Room Melodies LP

Very cool stuff here. Imagine SUPERCHUNK and DINOSAUR JR. energy with David Johansen at the helm—fuzzy punk with a snotty vocalist. The album is laid out well and ebbs and flows between high-energy anthems and low-key ballads. Speaking of production, this sounds like it was unearthed from the '70s, and I mean that in the best way possible. Everything is leveled-out perfectly and is clean as can be. Distortion is crisp and natural, paired strongly with a tight rhythm section. Solid work, JETS.

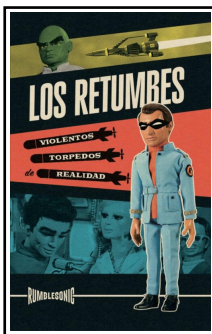
Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Just Because



LOS RETUMBES – Violentos Torpedos Realidad cassette

The second full-length from this Crazy 88s-masked duo out of Barakaldo, Spain comes in a tiny run of 25 red-shell cassettes on Nashville's Knuckles on Stun. What's inside is stripped-down, '50s-rooted rock'n'roll delivered with lo-fi urgency and a surfy twang. The band quotes BILLY CHILDISH and LINK WRAY as inspirations, and I found the music to be playful and oddly wholesome—maybe they're the spiritual descendants of HASIL ADKINS. Garage punk often revels in abrasion, but this feels like a different proposition: one more rooted in dancing, sweating, and smiling through the noise. Recommended for people who like to have a good time. Check out "Come On!"

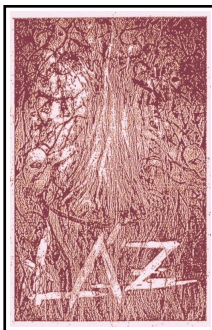
Reviewer: Jeff Cost
Label: Knuckles on Stun



LÁZ – Lássan Átjáró Zavar cassette

A couple years ago, I wrote a review of Hungarian punks HALOTT KÍGYÓK. Little did I know at that time that HALOTT KÍGYÓK was in the process of dissolving and LÁZ was being conceived. LÁZ pushes the limits set by their previous band while remaining within its architecture, so the resulting sound has more post-punk structure and hardcore punk swagger. Petra's vocals are often reminiscent of LYDIA LUNCH, especially when the band enters a moment of jazzed-out, no wave drone. The band themselves cite SACCHARINE TRUST as an inspiration, and that comes through frequently as well. The eight-song *Lássan Átjáró Zavar* cassette is well worth a listen, and is currently one of my obsessions.

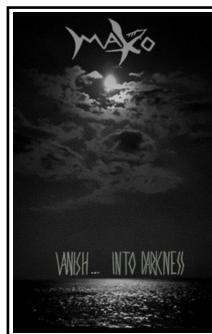
Reviewer: Seth McBurney
Label: Pizza Days / Szégyen Kazetták / Urban Lurk



MAKO – Vanish... Into Darkness cassette

Tennessee-based extreme music novelty project themed entirely about sharks, as could potentially be deduced by the name. My initial thought of the project is that it was probably a fun, goofy thing to do with some friends over the course of a weekend, and I highly doubted we would see another release by MAKO. Doing some digging, I have found that, against all odds, this is somehow the band's fifth release, and they are a self-proclaimed "sharkgrind" band. Well, guess I was way off. Granted, I don't have a ton of knowledge about modern grindcore or its subgenre of goregrind, and know absolutely nothing about its sub-subgenre of sharkgrind. Onto the music. The band's shark obsession might sound like a fun gimmick on paper, but MAKO proves that even apex predators can flop. There are plenty of hooks, but unfortunately they've all gone dull, resulting in a sea of forgettable riffs. Mostly the recording just kind of sounds like unremarkable grindcore, but there are multiple times where the song will be bopping along at a decent pace, then the tempo drastically slows down when blastbeats are forced in, waiting for the beat to catch up. Peppering the little surf drumbeat into the most tongue-in-cheek song on the tape ("Shark Attack!") was a fun little touch, tho. When all is said and done, this is a real catch-and-release kind of cassette for me.

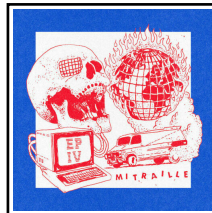
Reviewer: Biff Bifaro
Label: Tennessee Cold Cuts



MITRAILLE – EP IV EP

Classic garage rock meets power pop bringing to mind EXPLODING HEARTS, MARKED MEN, and NIGHT BIRDS. There's also a hint of OPERATION IVY here, and I chalk that up to the production and energy more so than anything else—that and the fact that these songs are total earworms. I found myself singing these songs throughout the day after one listen, specifically "One More Last Goodbye" and "Fuck You I'm Going on Tour." Their Bandcamp listing mentions MOTÖRHEAD as a huge influence, and I can hear that as well, with their timeless guitar solos that are tight and catchy. This one is over super quick but it's one hell of a ride.

Reviewer: Jake Joyce
Label: Belly Button



MORTAR – Final Victim LP

With a moniker like MORTAR and a cover depicting two crows ravaging a dove, the listener is left with little doubt about this band's intent: hammering the point home through heavy hardcore punk music. I have to admit I had not paid much attention to MORTAR before although *Final Victim* is already their second record, so I was curious to hear what they were on about. The band originally started as a one-man project by Jarek, a Polish punk living in London, formerly in MEINHOF and cult band GUERNICA Y LUNO. An instantly striking element of the LP is how downtuned and metallic it sounds, not unlike SKITSYSTEM or WOLFBRIGADE maybe, which confers a rather ominous vibe. It is a well-produced work highlighting the music's heaviness and its old school groove. Contrary to the Swedish crust hardcore school which MORTAR certainly looks up to, the music is not all about the D-beat pace, as some songs use the classic binary death metal beat, and the distinctly English vocals are shouted in a punk way rather than growled in a metal one, which keeps it spiky. I think that it works well on the whole, it is a focused effort and you can tell they thought it over. I did enjoy listening to the album, but still think it misses that little extra something to make it really compelling.

Reviewer: Romain Bassot
Label: Deathtrap Distro / DIY Koto / Phobia / Urgency / Urinal Vinyl



NEGLECTED / POSITIVE OUTLOOK – Final Solution / No More War! split LP

The record that no Bay Area nerd even knew they needed until they heard it, because holy shit, these two demos are stunners. POSITIVE OUTLOOK featured VIOLENT COERCION/ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT guitarist Eric McIntire, and after a few member changes in 1987, they kinda morphed into NEGLECTED when the sound got a bit darker. Both bands played screaming '80s USHC—fast 'n loose and full of energy, the kind of shit that needs to be unearthed and preserved. The LP comes with a massive booklet full of stuff that was probably just sitting in a shoebox until F.O.A.D. came calling...mandatory dose of under-appreciated Bay Area hardcore.

Reviewer: Robert Collins
Label: F.O.A.D.

